

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1–16 (Canceled).

17. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, further comprising:

- (i) a step in which a user is informed of an estimated period of time required for downloading the route guide information determined based upon a physical quantity indicating a data size of the route guide information;
- (ii) a step in which the information terminal transmits a request to the information distribution center to transmit the route guide information in installments according to an instruction by the user; and
- (iii) a step in which the information distribution center receives the request.

18. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the guide information includes at least a guidance for advancing direction at each guide point on the recommended route.

19. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 18, wherein:

the portion of the guide information corresponding to the area near the start point includes guide information for a block extending from the start point to a next guide point.

20. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the data size of the route guide information is a data size of the guide information or a number of guide points contained in the guide information.

21. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

after starting the route guidance, the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center a request for the second piece of the guide information, and

the information distribution center extracts and transmits the second piece of the guide information.

22. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 21, wherein:

each time the request for the second piece of the guide information is received, the information distribution center transmits guide information extracted in a unit corresponding to a guide point to the information terminal.

Claims 23-24 (Canceled).

25. (Currently Amended) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information through a route search calculation, the route guide information including route information containing nodes representing the recommended route and guide information containing guide point data for the recommended route, by which a driver is guided at a guide point for the recommended route, ~~through a route search calculation, the guide information including at least and a guidanee for an indication of an~~ advancing direction at the guide point on the recommended route;

(c) a step in which the information distribution center extracts a first piece of the guide information for an area of the recommended route near the start point, with a remaining portion of the guide information for a remaining area of the recommended route being defined as a second piece of the guide information; and

(d) a step in which the information distribution center transmits to the information terminal all of the route information for the recommended route contained in a result of the route search calculation at once, the first piece of the guide information after the transmission of all of the route information, and the second piece of the guide information after the transmission of the first piece of the guide information separately from the first piece of the guide information; and

(e) a step in which the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving the route information and the first piece of the guide information from the information distribution center.

26. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the guide information includes a guidance for advancing direction at each guide point on the recommended route.

Claims 27-33 (Canceled).

34. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the guide point data includes at least one of enlarged map data and audio data.

35. (Withdrawn) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the step (c) is performed when an actual transmission rate at which the information terminal receives the route information is lower than a predetermined value.

36. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the step (c) is performed when a distance between the starting point and the destination is not smaller than a predetermined value.

37. (Withdrawn) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the step (c) is performed when the communication device whose data transfer rate is not higher than a predetermined value is connected to the information terminal.